644 fields. On that day, the Mogho Naba had one or two cows
651 slaughtered and a large quantity of sagbo (millet cakes) prepared
241 for the workers. If the latter, after being assembled two or three times in the manner indicated above, were not finished with all the fields, the work was carried on by the samand'kamba (the people who dwelt in the outer courtyard of the Mogho Naba).

644 The emperor, however, received none of the millet grown in
574 his own fields, which, incidentally, did not have their present boundaries. This millet was reserved exclusively [74] for use as food for foreign visitors and for the feeding of horses (1).

1. For the ceremony of threshing this millet (kawinré), see the special chapter below [Chapter 16].

644 It was the duty of the canton chiefs and the ministers to pro-
651 vide loads of millet for the use of the Mogho Naba and his harem ("harem" should be understood to mean all young or middle-aged women, but to exclude the elderly women who have to support themselves and who have their private fields).

644 (b) Repair of the houses of the Mogho Naba. The work of
651 building and repairing the houses actually belonging to the em-
356 peror fell entirely upon the inhabitants of Bilbalogo (section of the Baloum Naba), Kamsaonghin (section of the chief eunuch), and Dapoya (section of the slaves of the Mogho Naba).

[343] The outbuildings, wédanga, four round huts with thatched roofs located outside the emperor's house, served as stables for the horses given to the Mogho Naba by canton chiefs or other personages and were built and maintained by three ministers, the Ouidi Naba, Larrhallé Naba, and Gounga Naba, with the help of the people in their sections.

The tamping of the floors and clay roofs was done wholly by the wives of the persons responsible for [75] the construction or repair, that is, the wives of the ministers and of the inhabitants of their sections.

651 Labor service due the province chiefs, ministers of the emperor.
645 (a) Cultivation of fields. The fields belonging to the ministers
241 of the Mogho Naba were cultivated by a system of payments in kind as follows.

644 conferred by the Mogho Naba on the canton chiefs.

292 554 With the exception of the Tenkodogo Naba and, more recently, the Boussouma Naba, neither of whom renders honors to the Mogho Naba, all ministers, other petty dima, and chiefs of Mossi cantons must take off his cap to greet the emperor.

576 554 645 (a) Between ministers. The Ouidi Naba does not remove his cap for any of his colleagues.

The Larrhallé Naba, Gounga Naba, and Kamsaongo Naba are equals and greet each other with their caps on.

The Baloum Naba and Samandé Naba are also equals, and they do not take off their caps when greeting each other. However, they were required to remove their caps (pougla) and even to perform the kantissé in the presence of the three principal ministers.

[116] Next in importance are the Nemdo Naba or "chief of the meat" [in charge of slaughtering], the Poé Naba who is confessor to the emperor's wives, the Bend Naba, chief of the drummers, and, finally, a whole string of petty chiefs of no importance who can hardly be distinguished from the general populace and whom it would be fruitless to enumerate here.

The Poé Naba may keep his cap on when he is in the presence of the Baloum Naba or the Samandé Naba, but he must remove it for the other ministers and must even prostrate himself to perform the kantissé.

645 574 Not very long ago, when the province chiefs of Ouagadougou possessed neither comfortable houses nor furniture, the ministers rarely visited each other. I have even once seen a minister sit on the ground in order to give his seat to one of his colleagues.

645 Whenever matters came up which required a meeting, the ministers met at night in one or another of their homes without the knowledge of the public.

645 576 Today, the principal ministers have proper reception rooms. They can, therefore, remain seated when a more important colleague calls upon them and limit their special consideration of the visitor to offering him a Morris armchair or a folding chair.

701 554 645 The Tensoba, the minister of war, never takes off his cap for a minister or a canton chief. He does so only before the emperor.

701 554 645 Formerly, when war broke out and he was summoned to [117] Ouagadougou, the Tansoba [sic] assembled the principal ministers of the Mogho Naba at the home of his host, and his word was final.

Aside from this special case, he might call upon a minister, but then a servitor always brought along the cushion on which he would sit until the minister receives him in his private quarters. He was never received in public.

Once inside, the Tansoba occupied the best seat, and the minister got down on the floor and performed the Mossi salute.

In sum, the Tansoba was held in higher esteem than any other personage at the king's court.

645 574 (b) At the present time. Today ministers often visit each other. Since they have rapid means of transportation at their disposal, they regularly go about without escorts. Most often their visits are made in order to deal with matters of general interest.

645 576 574 When a minister calls upon another minister, he keeps his cap on and neither removes his shoes nor performs the kantissé. They are equals. This equality has been established by the local administration which has granted the same rights and salary to all. The minister shakes hands with his colleague and takes a seat. He is served copious quantities of beer, and then he takes his leave.

642 In spite of assertions to the contrary, the Mossi empire is politically disorganized. This accounts for the errors committed by the local administration and the [118] mistakes held against the ministers of the Mogho Naba who for a long time were granted too much power.

The Origin of Mossi Chiefdom (Legend), or the Way the Peulh, the Yarcé, and the Blacksmiths Salute Mossi Chiefs

773 184 576 The Peulh, the Yarcé, and, to a certain extent, the blacksmiths do not perform the kantissé (Mossi salute). They have a different way of saluting naba. A curious legend explains this phenomenon. However bizarre it may seem, it is not lacking in interest, and we shall tell it just as it was handed down to us.

584 visits and presents a few small gifts. This state of affairs goes on for one or several years. Finally the head of the family calls together his little council and makes known his intention of giving So-and-So's daughter to X... from such-and-such village. There is seldom a refusal since he has sole authority to give the girls in marriage. The young man is then sent to make the acquaintance of his prospective in-laws. As soon as he is presented, he makes a small gift (usually [175] 100 to 1,000 cowries are given).

If the girl is the oldest daughter, her fiancé is expected to bring a sheep, a hoe, a guinea hen, and some beer.

585 The young man is then told the date on which he may send for his fiancée. He has nothing further to do, except to make some preparations and to wait. When the girl is brought to him, he kills some chickens and a goat if he has one, and he has food prepared for the girl's escort. He must also give cowries to them, the amount depending on his own resources.

In many villages the girls married in this way never leave their husbands for fear of being cursed by their parents and condemned never to see their native villages again.

574 851 Finally, if the wife gives birth, the husband sends a chicken to the village elder and the wife goes there to visit.

787 584 Girls who are hostile to a husband. These are girls whom the soothsayers point out as hostile to a husband.

Although these girls are promised at an early age, just like other girls, they must not know that they are engaged, and if their fiancés should by chance come to visit, they are treated like ordinary guests who have just happened by.

583 When such a girl reaches seventeen, her fiancé arranges with her family to send her to the waterhole, the well, or the nearest market.

[176] The fiancé selects a group of his strongest friends, plies them with beer, and sends them off with instructions to abduct his fiancée on the way. The latter, accompanied by a woman or by other girls, is surrounded unexpectedly and seized by strong arms despite the resistance, often quite vigorous, of her brothers or her companions. She is then taken to the home of her husband.

A few days later some people are designated to take the girl's effects to her husband's home and to receive the traditional gifts.

593 reprimand them, while the mother's role, here as elsewhere, is to indulge her children.

595 The children of different wives are quite fond of one another and often exchange help. When the father dies, the eldest son make no distinction among his brothers and helps them all as best he can. Polygamy seems to present no drawbacks in this respect.

When a man has several wives, his first wife (porkyema) is mistress of the household rather than his mother. All the other wives are on an equal footing, even the slaves, excepting, of course, those for whom the husband has a special preference. As the number of wives increases, so does the authority of the first wife, who wants /39/ her husband to have as many wives as possible. Each wife has a separate hut where she lives with her children, and this avoids many a quarrel. The husband goes to the hut of the woman he desires, or he has her come to his own hut. When a man works in his field, all his wives and children must help him, because he feeds them all and gives them a daily millet ration; it is, accordingly, only fair that all should take part in agricultural work within the limits of their capacity.

593 443 421 Provided that a woman remain at her husband's disposal and help him in the fields, she is free to do as she pleases. She goes to market to sell the grain, the spices for sauce, and the thread to weave cloth; but the husband sells the fabric strips and the raw cotton. During the winter each woman may have her own field to cultivate with her children, and the harvest belongs wholly to her. The husband has no say in the matter. If the woman spins cotton, she sells it at the market or even to her husband; if she brews beer, she offers one jar to her husband, but if he entertains friends and wants additional jars, he must pay cash for them. It is not unusual for a woman to refuse her husband credit, for who knows when he would pay?

593 574 A woman may visit her relatives with the permission of her husband, who sets a return date. The woman rarely comes back on the date set, and the husband goes to fetch her himself, or he sends one of his friends with a piece of salt or a small gift. A woman especially likes to visit her relatives when she is pregnant or shortly after the baby's birth. She knows that she will be well cared for and especially that she will enjoy complete freedom. As a result, it is not unusual for a woman to leave her husband for several months and to return only after considerable coaxing. Most quarrels between one Mossi and another derive from their wives and from their debts; yet it may not be said, as a general rule, that women are unhappy or ill treated.

[578]

439 from the south, bracelets, and fabric strips, and they import salt and hoes. Often they take only money with them and return with salt bars which sell on the market for one to one and a half, sometimes even two francs, a kilogram. Around Fada N'Gourma (Binge /sic/ to the natives), Say, and Niamey, Karite butter, locust bean flour, and especially kalro pellets are exported, while onions, garlic, and sometimes horses are imported. There is no trade with Dahomey.

484 The natives travel in short stages of 20, 25, or at most 30 kilometers a day. They set out at dawn or whenever the moon sheds sufficient light and stop when the sun becomes too hot. They set out again when the sun dips on the horizon and stop in time to prepare a meal if their wives accompany them, which is rare, or to buy something to eat if they are alone. They spend the night with a friend if [574] they /63/ have one in the locality and lengthen or shorten their day's march if they expect to find an acquaintance in a certain village. The livestock feed as they walk, and donkeys carry the exchange goods and especially the kola nuts on the way back.

482 Nearly all travellers bear part of their load on their head. Since we have come to mention this, let us again quote Delafosse: "Portage has been much slandered in France these past few years. It has been cited as a barbarous custom, a form of slavery which we had supposedly introduced in Africa and imposed on the unfortunate Negroes. This merely proves that the French people like to discuss things of which they know little. The very first geographers and travellers who spoke of the Sudanic Negroes—Herodotus among the Greeks, El Bekri among the Arabs—said that beyond the Sahara, where horses and camels cannot stand the climate, the natives themselves carried burdens on their heads over very long distances." (6) These remarks

6. Delafosse, Le peuple Siéna/ The Siena People/, p. 53.

are strictly true. Abuses on our part lie in forcing the pace and making the natives run with their loads in the hot sun or in exceeding the regulation weight. If reasonable limits are observed, the Blacks accustomed from infancy to the bearing of heavy burdens on their heads—in their country, everything is carried in this fashion—are no more to be pitied than our soldiers burdened on long marches with

527 [574] everywhere on the same day, and by and large people stay home to eat and drink. They go visiting on the days which follow.[1]

On the morrow of the day when the moon appears on the horizon, that is, nine days before the feast, the chief of the Kalmodo Yarsé solemnly comes to greet /97/ the naba of Koupéla. He bears in his hand the spear of Naba Silga, one of the predecessors of the present naba, and speaks approximately as follows. Naba Gado (the naba of the Kalmodo Yarsé) and Naba Silga were friends. The slave of Naba Gado ran away, and the naba looked for him everywhere but could not find him. Naba Gado went to Naba Silga and said; "My slave has run away, and I have looked for him everywhere in vain." Naba Silga replied, "I have not seen him either." And Naba Gado went on looking for his slave. Finally he found him and came to tell Naba Silga, who had the slave returned to him. To show his gratitude, Naba Gado offered Naba Silga the feast of fire. The latter refused, saying, "It is fire, and fire burns." Then Naba Gado suggested the fast, Ramadan. Naba Silga refused again, for fasting is hunger and thirst, and would a friend make such a gift to his friend? Then Naba Gado suggested the kibsa, but with the condition that every year Naba Silga should prepare abundant food for him and all his people, that all should come and celebrate the festivities here and make merry with their hearts full of joy. Naba Silga readily agreed.

When the naba of Kalmodo finishes this little speech, the first wife of the naba of Koupéla offers him a gourd of water, for Moslems do not drink fermented beer, and the naba of Kalmodo sings the praises of all the predecessors of the present naba of Koupéla. Then everyone makes noise and dances. A week later, the naba of Kalmodo always returns with the spear and the war drum. The naba of Koupéla offers him a beef which the naba of Kalmodo slaughters. He pours the blood on the spear and says, "May God grant health to the naba and to his ministers!" The naba has the victuals brought in. When all have eaten, they come to greet the naba, saying, "May God grant you another year!" and then they depart.

These two festive days, basra and kibsa, are observed by all Mossi. (3) There are others peculiar to the naba of Koupéla, which we shall

3. To be exact, it must be said that the name basra is not used everywhere in Mossi country, but the feast itself appears to be

[1] [i.e., following the Kibsa, the Moslem sheep feast. - Analyst]

539 The goat replied, "The hyena should give all of herself." T
told the hyena to remove her own leg. The hyena bit herse
and she ran away. The lion caught her and killed her. The
ran away with his salt and went home.

This is why the hyena attacks livestock.

181 The Mossi are polite. This is the quality that first strikes
576 who have dealings with them. We mentioned earlier that th
always greet one another. In fear of their nabas, the Mossi
before them a respectful, almost humiliating posture. They
attentive to important outsiders and see to it that they shoul
nothing a Mossi might wish: a sitting stool and mat are brou
immediately along with the drink; the food is abundant an
clean and carefully prepared.

181 The Mossi are very hospitable and willingly give alms fo
574 sake, that is, to poor people who cannot repay. They are g
and always share with their neighbors, and when they have
beer, they hand it out liberally. No woman who is brewing
allow a stranger of some importance to go by without offeri
gourdful, and she is displeased if he refuses. An object on
is never retrieved, and stratagems must be used to make a n
back under some pretext what he has given away.

576 /114/ The Mossi always offer things with the right hand.
insult to pass the gourd or to take it with the left hand. The
person in a group helps himself from a dish first, and all tho
follow in order of seniority, down to the youngest. On the
264 hand, the eldest stops eating first, and it is the youngest wh
27 last bits and cleans the gourd. When drinking, however, th
eminent person drinks the last drop.

576 Children do not greet their parents in the home, because
574 home; but if a properly brought-up girl sees her mother com
a full jar or a basket, she rushes to take the load from her,
the woman is only a few yards from the soukala. When a fr
come to visit, it is considered good manners to carry her lo
some distance when she leaves. In any case, visitors are al
on their way, sometimes to the outskirts of the village.

576 The Mossi do not lack tact and sensibility. When they w
thing, they first delegate a friend with a gift, then send wo
they have a small matter to discuss; sometimes they hint at
may be and leave without waiting for an answer. Some tim

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hoisted him on their shoulders and proceeded to his host's house with loud acclaim.

The next morning, the new chief went to the palace to pay homage to the Mogho Naba and receive from him the traditional cowries, three kola nuts, and a small jar of millet water. In the days that followed, he celebrated his good fortune at the house of the important ministers and court officials. About a week later he returned to the palace, and the Baloum Naba's chief assistant invested him with the insignia of office: a white gown, a cushion, a pair of slippers, and, most important, a bonnet—the true symbol of chieftainship. Soon afterward, the new chief asked the Mogho Naba and his provincial minister for permission to return home. He was then provided with an escort to accompany him to his district.

The journey of a new chief to his district was marked by pomp and ceremony. The Nobere Naba stopped at such districts as Toudou and Twili, where he was entertained by the chiefs and presented with wives and other gifts. Some districts he would never be allowed to visit again, and others he had to bypass during his joyful journey. The reasons for these restrictions and prohibitions have long since been forgotten, but they were probably instituted to prevent conflicts among Kombemba and to prevent the new chief from coming into contact with the descendants of the Kouritadamba of former Mogho Nanamse.

As the new Nobere Naba neared his district, he was met by a welcoming committee of village chiefs, nobles, and commoners, who pledged allegiance to him and gave him wives, goods, clothing, money, grain, and livestock. He was then taken to the Soulougre Naba, a descendant of the aboriginal Ninisi, at whose hands he had to undergo another series of rites before he could set up his new compound and begin his rule. These ceremonies were rather simple in comparison with those at Ouagadougou, but they represented a ritual re-enactment of the Mossi conquest of the district, and reinforced the status relationship between the Mossi and the aboriginal population. At the end of seven days, the Kombere Naba gave the Soulougre Naba a black cow to be sacrificed at a pool called Yarega, a shrine of the ancient Ninisi on a tributary of the White Volta River. When this final rite was over, an enthusiastic crowd fetched the chief, and the young people of Soulougre village bore him aloft to his compound. A period of celebration now began during which all the heads of villages, lineages, and compounds paid homage and swore allegiance to their ruler. This ended when the chief summoned his escort from Ouagadougou and gave presents to those who wished to return there and wives and land to those who wished to settle in his district.

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651 creased his force" and ultimately added to his income. Men who had been 634 compelled to flee from other districts because of crimes or power struggles 167 were granted refuge and given pughsiudse. In this manner, the district 434 chief, like the Mogho Naba, established seignorial rights over his new subjects, incorporated them into the district, and obtained goods and services from them. The better a district chief's reputation, the greater the number of refugees who sought shelter with him and added to his wealth. Conversely, a chief who was known for his injustice, his rascality, and his excessive demands from persons seeking the village nam was shunned by potential subjects and might even be deserted by his own.

434 Those persons who visited the district chief's compound to settle court 651 cases also contributed to his revenue. When the case dealt with cattle or 634 other livestock, the chief received a few animals. In other cases, he received [692] only the customary gifts from the litigants. He also received gifts from 634 all the families in his district several times a year. One occasion was the 431 "Tense," a festival in honor of the mother of Mogho Naba Oubri, the 796 founder of the Ouagadougou dynasty; the other was the Basgha. During 434 these two ceremonies every village chief, preceded by his district administrator and followed by his subjects, paid homage to the district chief and gave him presents. The district chief retained part of what he received for [574] the upkeep of his household and to fulfill such obligations as hospitality to travelers, and added the remainder to his own annual tribute to the Mogho [651] Naba.

634 The manner in which the district chief collected his annual tax or tribute for the Mogho Naba is the subject of controversy. Several of my re- 651 spondents declared that the collection of this tribute was rather informal. 434 The district chief allegedly notified the village chiefs that he wished to give a present to the Mogho Naba, and these chiefs sent word to the family heads, who, in turn, notified every household. The village people then collected chickens and livestock, baskets of grain, and cowries, and sent them up through the hierarchy to the district chief. The district chief's retainers 634 checked the gifts from each village very carefully, and if some villages gave 651 less than was expected of them, the district chief summoned their chiefs for 622 explanations. In most cases the district chief knew exactly how much could 434 be expected of his subjects, because his informers—usually his own pages and courtyard servants, or messengers of the local administrators—kept him informed of the wealth of each hamlet. Usually, a village chief who had withheld too much from the commodities turned over to him, or who had not demanded sufficient goods from his villagers, sought to make amends. It was in his interest to do so, since it was always dangerous to incur the

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district chief's wrath. Thus, there was some method in the collection of this tribute and certain expectations had to be met, even though many of the contributors may have felt that their gifts were voluntary.

In direct contrast, Dim Delobson, himself a chief, states that Mossi chiefs demanded a stipulated amount from their villagers. He adds, however, that the tribute "varied in amount according to the resources of the contributors," and that the district chief set the "amount of cowries and grain due from each village in accordance with the number of its inhabitants."[86] According to him, the rate of assessment was usually 100 cowries for a married man and 50 for an adult bachelor (apparently, this difference was an acknowledgment of the woman's contribution to her husband's wealth). In addition, each adult male was assessed 10 baskets of millet of about 100 pounds each. Dim Delobson adds that to these exactions the district chief added his own contributions to the Mogho Naba, usually in the form of cattle.

It seems that Dim Delobson rationalized and regularized a rather informal system of contributions. The present-day Mossi declare that soil differences in the villages and variations in rainfall prevented a district chief from demanding a set tribute, because no one could tell whether a crop would be good or bad. Only a ruler's informers could tell him how much he should receive each year, and the chief based his exactions on this report. Several of my respondents agreed with Dim Delobson that the district chief provided mostly cattle for the annual tribute to the Mogho Naba, and that the village people furnished cowries, small animals, and grain.

A district chief was seldom wealthy, because he always had to use his revenue to fulfill unexpected obligations toward his subjects, his superiors in the political hierarchy, and his household. He had to be generous to his subjects, providing millet water, millet beer, and the more expensive imported kola nuts for those who visited and conferred with him daily. He was expected to provide food and shelter for the countless strangers who settled in his district, until they could provide for themselves. He also lodged and fed the messengers who brought him orders from the capital, and gave them gifts to take back to the provincial ministers. And he had to provide goods for the many members of his family who depended upon him. Finally, in the event of crop failure or famine in any of his villages, he had to provide grain from his granaries to feed the hungry. "How could he do otherwise? Was he not a 'father' to his people?"

The expectation that the district chief should provide hospitality to his subjects was so strong that those chiefs or princes who were deprived of an income for any reason often resorted to banditry to fulfil their obliga-

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tions. Binger, who found Boukary Koutou (the future Mogho Naba Wobogo) living in exile for having led a rebellion against his brother, Mogho Naba Sanum, tells us:

> Boukary has no resources, and does not even have the advantage of receiving periodic tribute from several large villages. In order to subsist and to maintain a certain status, he is compelled to live by pillage and even by brigandage. From time to time, his horsemen make incursions into the outskirts of some Gurunsi or Kipirsi village, and carry off by surprise the inhabitants whom they find working the fields or looking for wood. His people also hide and lie in wait along the roads to capture any persons who may pass within their range. This type of behavior has given Boukary Naba a bad reputation. However, the people who understand his position forgive him, knowing the situation in which his brother has placed him. And, in spite of all this, he has numerous partisans, and many others who would be happy to see him gain power.[25]

Those district chiefs or princes who wished to retain their power legitimately were forced to be generous or run the risk of losing the allegiance and good will of their villagers, who were their ultimate supporters.

It is very difficult to generalize about the amount of revenue collected by a village chief. He did not receive any revenue from the land used by his villagers. He treated the weogho in his village in the same manner as the district chief. If some families grew too large and wanted to establish permanent residence in the village bush, they asked the chief for permission to settle there. However, many village chiefs had special areas of waste for their own use. They had usually received them as gifts from some district chief, and therefore had the right to collect tribute on any crops, firewood, or fish obtained from these lands.

The average village chief's main source of revenue was derived from the agricultural and other labor of his wives and relatives. A village chief received a number of wives from his subjects and from aliens living in his village. These women helped cultivate his fields. If their labor was insufficient he called a sosogha, to which he often invited his wives' relatives. Some chiefs also had serfs and slaves who helped cultivate their land and kept their cattle as well.

The village chief did not have the power to tax his subjects. Instead, he functioned as a channel through which commodities and services passed up the hierarchy and on to Ouagadougou. Many villagers voluntarily helped the chief to repair his huts and compound walls and to cut thatch for his roofs. Many gave him baskets of grain and other vegetable products after the harvest. They also visited him and gave him presents during the annual rites to his ancestors. In contrast to higher chiefs, however, the village head

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Binger's statement about the "squandering" to which "all the black chiefs" are prone reveals his ignorance of the nature, role, and function of West African chiefs in general and of Mossi chiefs in particular. These men were often the center of redistribution systems that embraced their entire territory. The Mossi chiefs did not necessarily squander their resources when they used them to support their household, their administrative staff, and even visitors to their realm. A rather large portion of the millet the Mogho Naba received was not even used by his own household, but was held for gifts to visiting strangers. Binger himself benefited from the generosity of Mogho Naba Sanum, and he provides us with excellent data about how Boukary Koutou distributed his resources: "I can say that never has a chief given me food, kola nuts, and beer as often as he did. I received things to eat two or three times a day."[28] No Mossi chief could have done less. This was a role that chiefs had to play, and they lost power and prestige if they proved inhospitable or parsimonious either to visiting strangers or to their own subjects.

Binger's lack of insight into the economic basis of the Mossi political organization also kept him from obtaining a clear understanding of the political system itself. For example, he saw the loose political organization of the Mossi as a sign of decadence, and felt that the Ouagadougou kingdom was too weak to survive for any length of time:

> Before long the Mossi empire will break up, and the country will be organized into a confederacy like Beledougou and Yatenga. This is an event that we Europeans can only favor. Experience has shown us that as soon as a Negro chief commands more than 2,000 people, he dreams of empire; his needs grow, and he tries to expand. Since his revenues are small, he labors under a deficit, which he must remedy with slave raids. In a confederacy the chiefs do not reach this point so rapidly. As soon as one of them begins to rise, the others can band together and nip his ambition in the bud.[29]

It is quite true that many of the political systems in the western Sudan had a loose character similar to that of a "confederacy." This was not due to the vigilance of neighboring chiefs, however. From time to time, such powerful rulers as Sundiata, Mansa Musa, Sonni-Ali, El Hadj Omar, and Samory Touré did arise and conquer vast areas, but they were unable to sustain their gains over extended periods.

The political organization of the Mossi was not decadent but structurally weak—its economic base was never strong enough to support a higher degree of centralization. Strong chiefs only tested the limits of the system; they could not change the system itself.

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provided the sacrificial animals for the royal tombs in the area of the capital, and the Ouagadougou Naba, as chief Tengsoba, performed the sacrifices. The Larhalle Naba also dispatched his servants to the distant districts where royal tombs were located, with orders to obtain (by force, if necessary) the animals for the sacrifices from the local populations and give them to the special guardians of the tombs. Sacrifices were made on the grave of Naba Oubri at Koudougou and on that of his father, Zoungourana, in the village of Zomtoega in Tenkodogo. However, there is no indication that a sacrifice was made on the grave of Ouedraogo, who is believed to have died in Sagabatenga but whose burial place is unknown. Nor is it clear whether, as some Mossi claim, annual sacrifices were made on the alleged grave of Nyennega in Gambaga. As soon as these preparatory sacrifices had been completed and the Mogho Naba had been notified, preparations were made for the celebration.

The Mogho Naba met with the Larhalle Naba, and the date of the Tense was set for twenty-one days after the meeting. On the following day, the Larhalle Naba made five cords out of tree bark and tied nineteen knots in each of them. The next day, he gave each provincial minister a cord to send to the districts in his province. The provincial ministers then sent their messengers with the cords to the districts, with orders to untie one knot every day the cords were in transit. Thus a district chief, counting the number of knots in the cord on the day it reached him, knew how many days were left before the Tense. As soon as the entire kingdom had been notified of the festival, the envoys returned to Ouagadougou and returned the cords to their ministers.

On the Friday morning before the Tense, the Larhalle Naba went to the palace. Kneeling before the monarch, he untied the last knot on each cord to indicate that the ceremony would begin on the morrow. To acknowledge this fact, the Mogho Naba distributed bars of salt to his courtiers and visitors instead of the customary kola nuts, beer, and millet water. Visitors left the court early in order to provide their families with foodstuffs for the celebration.

Early on Saturday morning, royal servants brought huge quantities of beef and mutton that had been cooked without pepper (this spice being disliked by the ancestors) and other foods, and deposited them in large heaps in the courtyard. Nearby, they also placed numerous large pots of millet beer. As soon as the morning ceremony was over, the Larhalle Naba slowly approached the Mogho Naba, who presented him with a new white robe. The minister donned the robe and walked to the piles of food, from which he took three portions of millet mush, dipped them in a specially

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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ity in local matters, even though the Indigénat had been abolished. They adjudicated minor offenses committed in their territories or referred to them on appeal by the districts and villages. They attempted to settle family quarrels and commercial cases, and ordered that restitution be made in cases of theft. However, they had to send any difficult case or major crime up the hierarchy until it reached the officials authorized to deal with it.

The French administrators also continued to act as intermediaries between the large commercial enterprises in Ouagadougou who wished to recruit men for labor or to buy local produce and enterprises in the larger Mossi towns. Thus, if a private firm in Ouagadougou wanted men to work on the roads, it asked the *chef de poste* (administrator) of a region to tell the district chiefs that its representatives would come to recruit men on a certain date. If a large business was planning to canvass a certain area in order to buy shea nuts, it asked the local administrators to notify the chiefs. No one was ever quite certain whether these activities were legal, but no one questioned them. The *chefs de poste* might simply have been giving the people information that they could not have obtained by any other means.

The Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou, like the supreme chiefs of the other Mossi regions, continued to perform both the administrative role assigned to him by the colonial government and his traditional politico-ceremonial role. He was partly responsible, through his active cooperation with the administration, for the rapidity with which the Upper Volta became a functioning entity. For example, in his anxiety to make his capital worthy of being the territory's administrative center, he gave his full support to the extension of the Abidjan–Bobo-Dioulasso railroad to Ouagadougou. But he always succeeded in giving the impression (to foreigners at least) of detachment and dissociation from the French administration. His behavior was quite different when he functioned as Mogho Naba of the Ouagadougou Mossi. The following is a brief description of a visit he made to one of the districts:

> The Mogho Naba arrived unexpectedly at the district chief's headquarters, where no preparations had been made for his visit. It appears that he was on a tour of his domains to consult with the local chiefs about the forthcoming elections, and had simply dropped in to visit the district chief. However, as soon as his presence became known around the district, important village chiefs and the heads of lineages all put on their robes and appeared to pay homage to him. Meanwhile, he was consulting with his host. But as soon as the conversation was over he came out into the compound, where he was saluted by the chief's Bendere, who praised the royal ancestors by reciting

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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their genealogies and traditions. The Mogho Naba was pleased by the recitation and thanked the drummer.

Later that day, the Mogho Naba presented himself in the courtyard of the district chief's compound to be saluted by the village chiefs and by the heads of lineages. They came to him in the traditional way, rubbing their palms and bending their foreheads to the ground. He addressed them, and in response they snapped their fingers in the customary manner. Then, one by one, the village chiefs and the lineage elders came to their monarch and gave him presents of money which ranged from 50 to 200 francs. The Mogho Naba paid little attention to the sums given, being more interested in this act of homage and fealty. However, he listened carefully as each donor announced his name and rank within the official hierarchy or village. He later thanked them collectively and departed. This ceremony, while not very elaborate, differed little in detail from those characteristic of the traditional Mossi's relationship to their Mogho Naba. The new element here was that the monarch was traveling around his domain, establishing a close relationship with his chiefs and subjects, whose support he needed for his modern political alliances.[28]

The Mogho Naba continued to hold the morning ceremony at court, even though it was rapidly losing its traditional function and becoming of major interest only to visitors. He also continued to hold those ceremonies associated with individual appointments to the nam and with traditional sacrifices. Unknown to many was the fact that traditional authorities at court still judged legal cases which many Mossi refused to take to the Europeans.

In contrast to the Mogho Naba, the traditional provincial ministers now lost most of the power they had held in the pre-conquest period, and all the duties they had acquired in the immediate post-conquest era. As we have seen, one minister, the Baloum Naba, had entered politics at the suggestion of the Mogho Naba, but even he was now relegated to the entourage that accompanied the Mogho Naba and the European administrators on visits to the ministers' former provinces. The increased number of European administrators had made these ministers superfluous.

The district chiefs retained some prestige after the war. They could still judge legal cases, with the understanding that the litigants were free to go to the Europeans if they so desired and had to be sent there in serious cases. Their major problem was that a more efficient administration was taking a greater interest in district affairs. For the first time since the conquest, officials were visiting some of the more remote villages. No longer were they said to "act as locusts"—that is, to appear periodically to garner supplies and men from the districts and then disappear until the next onslaught. Instead, they appeared regularly to collect taxes and to take censuses, and

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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8. Cf. Marc, p. 156.
9. Cf. Fortes, pp. 258–71.
10. Skinner, "The Diffusion of Islam," pp. 659–69.
11. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, pp. 585–86.
12. Dim Delobson, p. 205.
13. Crozat, p. 4820.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 4822.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 4835.
16. Binger, I, 452.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 456.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 452–56.
19. Archives, Document 15G-190 (1897–98). Instructions left to Captain Scal by Destenave, June 1897.

CHAPTER NINE

1. Marc, p. 17.

2. Barth, III, 595. Although it is possible that the Wolof prince Bemoy did hear about the Mossi, he was mistaken about the name of their ruler. Interestingly enough, the title "Ogane" is not too dissimilar from Hogon, the title of head men among the Dogon (Habe or Kado) whom the Mossi had pushed into the hills of Bandiagara. Cf. Bascom, p. 24.

3. Barth, III, 606.
4. Bowdich, p. 180.
5. Dupuis, Appendix CVII.
6. Clapperton, II, 323.

7. Barth, III, 643–49. As cited earlier, Barth states that the Portuguese got reports about the Mossi in the year 1533 "from the wrong side, namely from Benin." This may not have been altogether "the wrong side," however, for Barth gives us data on caravans from Mossi country to Sansane Mango in Togoland that indicate how news about the Mossi might have traveled from the interior to Benin city in Nigeria.

8. Koelle, p. 6. Dixon, who seems to have been one of the few captured Mossi sold to the West, reports: "Mose is west of Gurma, east of Andemtenga, where a different language is spoken. Mose is also two days journey from Butmera, where the same language is spoken; four days from Bulega [Bolga tanga], the language still the same, and confederate with Kambonse, i.e. Asante; two days from Yaongo, with still the same language; six days from Bosanse which is at enmity with Mose and where people bore their lips, and often tie them together with grass, and whose language is different from Mose; four days from Busma also a different language, and in which country there is a very high mountain (Tanga) from which those who ascend never come back again [probably a reference to Plimpikou, the Mossi holy mountain]; three or four weeks from Kambonse, i.e. Asante. Kupeala is four days from Wardyga [Ouagadougou] the Mossi capital, whither the king of Asante often sent presents; and one month from Salak [Salaga], an Asante town, where they bring kola nuts."

9. Marc, p. 30.

10. Great Britain, Parliamentary papers xlvi, 1882.

11. The people of Nobere, Manga, and other districts surrounding Bere have traditions about Krause, who is remembered as the first white-skinned person ever seen in those parts. The color of his skin was attributed to the fact that, "like the fish," he had come out of the sea.

12. Krause, pp. 92 ff. Although there is no evidence to this effect in the literature, it appears certain that Mossi government officials knew of Krause's visit. They treated most travelers in the following manner: "After entering a town the party is given in charge of a man usually termed 'housemaster.' It is his duty to exercise surveillance over the action of the stranger and to report the result to the authorities. . . . The trader conducts his business through his 'housemaster,' who usually makes a handsome gain by acting as middleman (G. E. Ferguson, quoted in Wolfson, p. 199).